

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheets of drawings include changes to Figures 4A and 4B. The original labels were handwritten, and the drawings have been modified to contain computer-generated labels.

REMARKS

Claims 32-65 remain pending in this application. In the Office Action mailed October 17, 2006, the Examiner objected to Figures 4A and 4B for containing handwritten labels, and rejected claims 32, 37, 43-50, and 62 as being obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,594,429 ("White"). The Examiner also indicated that claims 51-65 were allowable, and that claims 33-36 and 38-42 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. Applicants thank the Examiner for her thorough examination of this application, and for promptly allowing several of the claims.

In response to the Examiner's remarks, Applicants have amended the rejected claims. Applicants also submit replacement Figures 4A and 4B with this Amendment.

Independent claim 32, as amended, patentably distinguishes the present invention from White in that it recites, for example, a process for forming an intermediate preform for manufacturing a microstructured optical fiber including, among other steps, removing a removable hole generating element for forming an elongated hole inside the intermediate preform by applying a load to said removable hole generating element, wherein said removable hole generating element has a diameter greater than 0.1 mm.¹

¹ Support for this amendment can be found in the specification, for example, at page 25, lines 28-30 ("The diameter of the hole generating elements is advantageously greater than 0.1 mm, to achieve a sufficient resistance to pulling").

As the Examiner noted in allowing dependent claim 33, which recites "wherein the removable hole generating element has a diameter between about 2 and 8 mm," White "discloses the diameter to be in the order of μm ." (10/17/06 Detailed Action at 5.) Because claim 32 now recites that "said removable hole generating element has a diameter greater than 0.1 mm," Applicants believe the claim is patentably distinguishable from White. Consequently, Applicants respectfully request allowance of claim 32. The remaining rejected claims all directly or indirectly depend from claim 32, so they are allowable for the same reasons claim 32 is allowable.

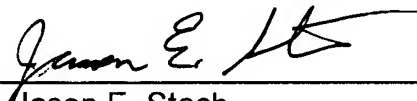
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: December 4, 2006

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Attachments: Replacement Drawing Sheets